

NRJA 229

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name F. W. Woolworth Building

other name/site number N/A

2. Location

street & town 3120-3122 Troost Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Kansas City N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64109

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles  
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

03/22/05  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

☐ removed from the National  
Register.

☐ other, (explain:)

F.W. Woolworth Building  
Name of Property

Jacison County, MO  
County and State

## 5. Classification

### Ownership of Property

(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

### Category of Property

(check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE

### Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Limestone

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other METAL/Bronze

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

F. W. Woolworth Building  
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO  
County and State

## 8. Description

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

### Period of Significance

1927-1955

### Significant Dates

1927-1928

### Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

F. W. Woolworth Building  
Name of Property

Jackson County, MO  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property Less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 3/6/4/0/2/7 4/3/2/5/7/0/3  
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property encompassing the North 50 Feet of the West 151 Feet of the East 161 Feet of Block 1 and the South 2 Feet of the West 151 Feet of the East 161 Feet of LOT 4 of Chadwick Subdivision Block 1 Troost Avenue Park. Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Property Tax No. N/A

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for this resource corresponds to the city lots on which it was constructed and with which it has been historically associated.

☐ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally F. Schwenk, Partner  
organization Historic Preservation Services, LLC date November 12, 2004  
street & number 323 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 112 telephone 816-221-5133  
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64105

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

**Maps** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs:** Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

name/title Robert A. Frazier, Manager, 3120 Troost, LLC  
street & number 1533 Locust Street telephone 816-283-0412  
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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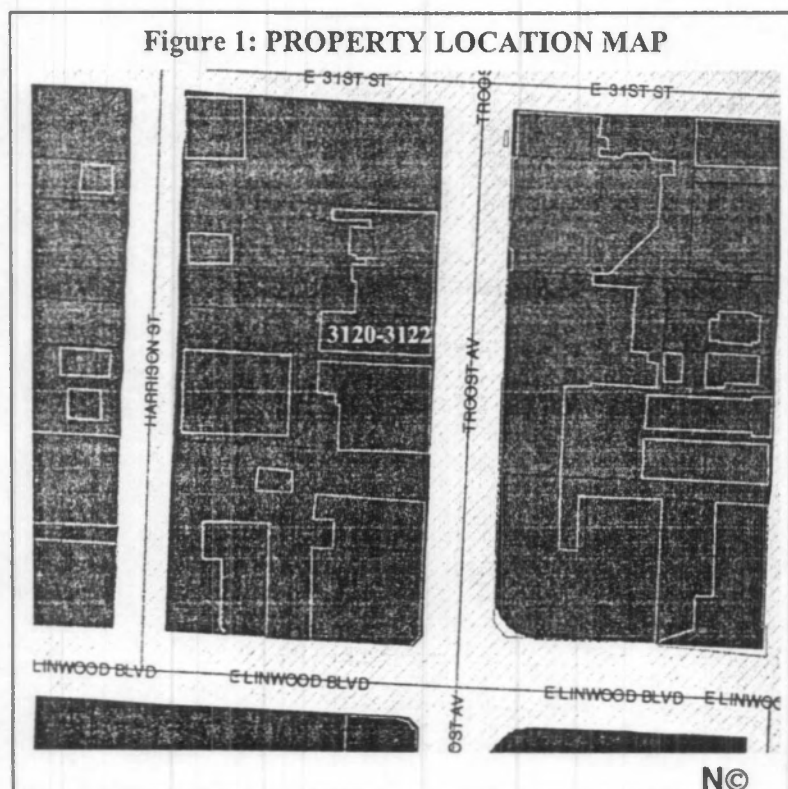
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section Number 7 Page 1

**F. W. Woolworth Building  
Jackson County, Missouri**

**SUMMARY DESCRIPTION**

The F. W. Woolworth Building located at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue<sup>1</sup> is a one-story, one-part commercial block building (Photograph #1). It is part of a streetscape of other one-part and two-part commercial block buildings dating from the first half of the twentieth century, the majority of which date from the 1920s. The rectangular plan measures approximately 45 feet by 130 feet. The flat roof slopes slightly to the rear elevation. A limestone foundation (Photographs #2 and #3) supports the solid brick walls that have orange tapestry brick facing on the primary façade. The storefront façade faces east onto Troost Avenue. The north elevation abuts the adjacent building. An open passageway, which is approximately six feet wide, separates the south elevation from the adjacent building. The west (rear) elevation (Photograph #3) faces onto a surface parking lot and alley. The lot slopes down to the west, resulting in an at-grade foundation line at the east end and an exposed foundation rising to approximately six feet above grade at the west elevation.



<sup>1</sup> The City of Kansas City, Missouri mapping programs list the building at 3118 Troost Avenue, an address numeration that is also used with 3120 and 3122 in city directories from the early twentieth century to designate the property.

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**F. W. Woolworth Building  
Jackson County, Missouri**

**ELABORATION**

**EAST (PRIMARY) FAÇADE**

The symmetrical storefront spans nearly the width of the building and half the height of the façade and features two recessed entries on the east (primary) façade (Photograph #1). This elevation features restrained ornamentation that incorporates neoclassical elements in the parapet (Photograph #4) and streamlined early twentieth century storefront design (Photographs #5 and #6), both of which were common 1920s commercial design treatments. A band of cast stone ornament with square-cut stone pieces that project downward from the band interrupts the tapestry brick piers on the north and south ends at the top of the storefront (Photographs #1 and #5). A stone stringcourse spans the façade at the roofline, above which is a broad crenellated parapet (Photograph #1). The parapet features recessed engaged stone balustrades in the north and south bays, and a narrow rectangular cast stone panel set flush with the building's address ("3120-3122"). Cast stone coping caps the parapet.

The storefront retains its original configuration and most of its materials. The large single-glazed plate glass windows are set in the original bronze frames supported by bulkheads with terrazzo cladding (Photographs #5, #6, and #9). The glazing in the southernmost window of the south storefront bay is in a non-historic divided aluminum frame installed within the original bronze frame that once held a single pane (Photographs #5 and #9). This same alteration occurs in the panel adjacent to the door at the north entrance on the south side. Non-historic aluminum-framed double-leaf doors, which date to the 1960s, (Photographs #7, #8, #9, and #10) fill the original opening below the fixed transoms in the recessed storefront entrances at the north and south ends of the storefront. The recessed entrances feature unique curved sections at the "corners" of the display windows. These curved "corners" consist of ten individual, narrow, vertical pieces of frameless cut glass installed to create a prism-like appearance (Photographs #6, #7, #9, and #10).

**SECONDARY ELEVATIONS**

The north elevation directly abuts the adjacent building. An examination of the interior wall reveals the presence of the original window openings that now contain brick infill (Photograph #11). Originally, the south elevation also contained numerous window openings with segmental brick arches and limestone sills. The lower openings toward the east end of south elevation now have brick infill. Openings that remain include three openings on the west end that are situated higher on the wall, and two openings in the stone foundation (Photograph #2). The west (rear) elevation featured window and door openings at the basement and first-story levels. Openings that remain include two window openings and a door

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**F. W. Woolworth Building  
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opening on the first story and one door opening at the basement level; other openings now contain brick infill or are covered with wood (Photograph #3).

**INTERIOR SPACES**

The original interior open space is undivided; interrupted only by wood columns positioned along the center of the building. Other than portions of a raised bookkeeping/cashier booth at the rear wall, no store fixtures remain (Photographs #11, #12, #13, and #14). The columns retain their wood wainscoting, while the upper column enclosures/finish treatment is missing (Photograph #12). The original plaster applied over the brick perimeter walls has also been removed, leaving the brick exposed. The original tin ceiling is in place and in good condition; however, there are a few missing panels (Photograph #14). The original hardwood floors are covered with mastic that once secured non-original floor tiles (Photograph #12). At the front of the building where there is no basement, the wood floors are damaged beyond repair and have been partially removed to enable investigation of the sub-structure prior to the development of a treatment and rehabilitation plan (Photograph #11). Non-historic fluorescent tube light fixtures illuminate the first floor.

The basement contains a large open space and several small storage rooms and employee restrooms. Some partitions have beadboard wall covering, while others have a plaster finish (Photograph #15). The stone foundation walls are exposed. A wood open joist floor system supports the first floor rests on brick piers (Photograph #16). Basement floors are of concrete. Incandescent lighting illuminates the basement.

**INTEGRITY**

The building occupies its original location and its setting continues to reflect commercial usage as a primary commercial corridor. Located in a blighted area, the building is on a block located between 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Linwood Boulevard that enjoys a high degree of integrity of size, scale, and massing of its historic commercial buildings. All of the buildings on the east side of the street are two stories in height and the majority feature 1920s Art Deco design elements. With the exception of one building, they are all eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as contributing elements to a district. On the west side of the street, all of the original buildings remain intact except for the vacant lot on the northwest corner of 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Troost Avenue, which was the site of the six-story Wirthman Building/Isis Theater. This side of the street includes both one- and two-story buildings. Most have façade modifications that appear to be reversible as there is visual evidence that the original façade design elements are encapsulated beneath metal, wood, and tile-covered sheathing. The one-part and two-part

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**F. W. Woolworth Building  
Jackson County, Missouri**

commercial block buildings that line Troost Avenue convey the commercial nature of this corridor that developed along Kansas City's major streetcar routes in the 1920s.

The historical integrity of the F. W. Woolworth Building dates to the 1927 alterations the owner made to an existing 1915 building prior to leasing the space to the F. W. Woolworth Company. In 1927, the owner doubled the size of the building, excavated a new basement, constructed a new flooring system, and remodeled the original façade. The building continues to convey its historic style, function, and technologies dating to the 1927 construction through the retention of its historic form, scale, massing, and materials; in particular, the high percentage of unaltered storefront elements. The F. W. Woolworth Building retains all of its original masonry, wood, and steel construction. With the exception of the loss of the original doors and the division of glazing in two of its display windows, the façade retains its character-defining stylistic ornament and design elements. The façade's stonework, the original storefront with its unique curved windows and copper clad frames, and the tapestry brickwork reflect a high degree of craftsmanship. The building also retains a high degree of its historic interior spatial relationships. This is particularly important as the Woolworth Company pioneered the concept of open display space counters where shoppers could see and select the merchandise they wished to purchase. The retention of the original floor with its wood open joist system is particularly important as the flooring system was noted for its ruggedness for both concentrated and moving floor loads.<sup>2</sup> Because of its high degree of architectural integrity, this commercial building retains the essential physical features that enable it to convey its historic identity and function and its significant local associations with commerce.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles George Ramsey and Harold Reeve Sleeper, *Architectural Graphic Standards for Architects, Engineers, Decorators, Builders and Draftsmen* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc; London: Chapman and Hall, Limited, 1932), 80-81



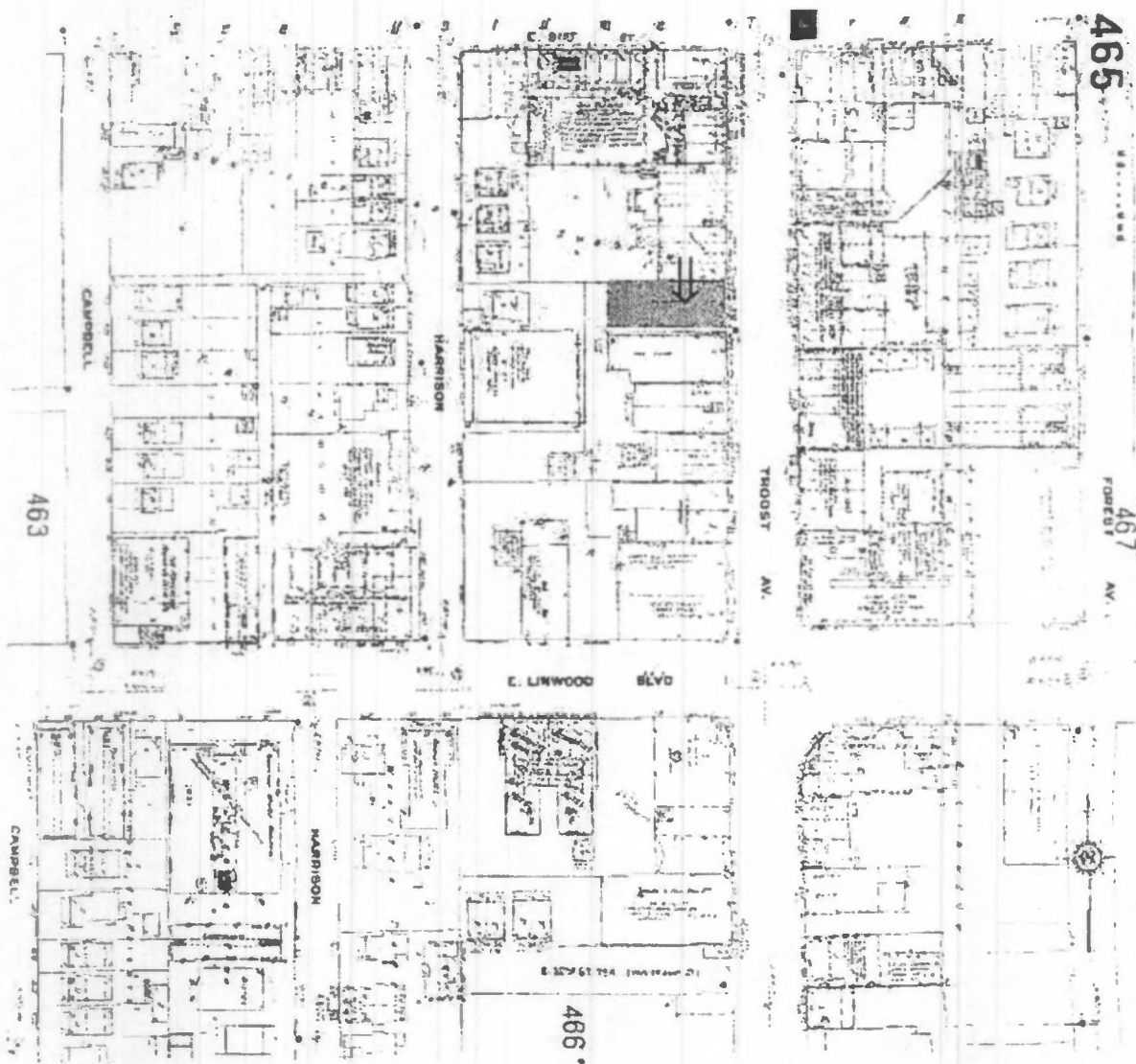
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**Figure 2: 1939 SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY MAP AS UPDATED THROUGH 1950**



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**F. W. Woolworth Building  
Jackson County, Missouri**

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Because of its high degree of architectural integrity and unique commercial associations, the F. W. Woolworth Building at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of COMMERCE for its significant associations with commercial development along Kansas City's electric streetcar corridors in the early twentieth century and for its association with the advent of the suburban Woolworth's Five-and-Ten-Cent chain store in Kansas City in the late 1920s. In particular, the building has associations with the corporate marketing program developed by the F. W. Woolworth Company that recognized the expanding suburban middle-class market along streetcar lines that had heavy pedestrian traffic at transfer points. As the only remaining "suburban" store erected by the Woolworth Company in Kansas City prior to World War II, it is a rare resource. It is additionally significant because at the time of its construction, even though Kansas City did not meet the Woolworth Company's population threshold, the company chose to invest in the expansion of its base in Kansas City due to the high volume of pedestrian traffic at the city's streetcar transfer points. Its interior structural plan, which featured a floor system engineered to create one large open space, adds to its significance for its association with the unique display and sales requirements of the F. W. Woolworth Company. Its period of significance begins in 1927 when its construction began, and ends in 1955, the arbitrary fifty-year threshold established by the National Park Service as a reasonable date from which to evaluate the significance of resources.

**ELABORATION**

**BUILDING HISTORY**

Erected in 1927-1928, the F. W. Woolworth Building at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue was one of three secondary suburban Woolworth stores established in Kansas City, Missouri in the 1920s, a period when no other dime store chain had more than one store in Kansas City.<sup>3</sup> The main and largest store, purchased in an acquisition of the S. H. Knox and Company<sup>4</sup> "five-and-ten-cent store" in 1911, was at 1105-1111 Main Street in the Kansas City's downtown central business district.

On May 4, 1926, The *Kansas City (MO) Post* reported the construction of the first suburban building for the Woolworth chain store company at 3923 Main Street.<sup>5</sup> Erected after an analysis of pedestrian traffic, this outlet faced the city's main commercial corridor in its fastest growing ward. During the 1920s, the

<sup>3</sup> The Woolworth and Kresge stores were originally listed in the city directories under "notions."

<sup>4</sup> Knox was a cousin of the Woolworth brothers.

<sup>5</sup> The building no longer stands.

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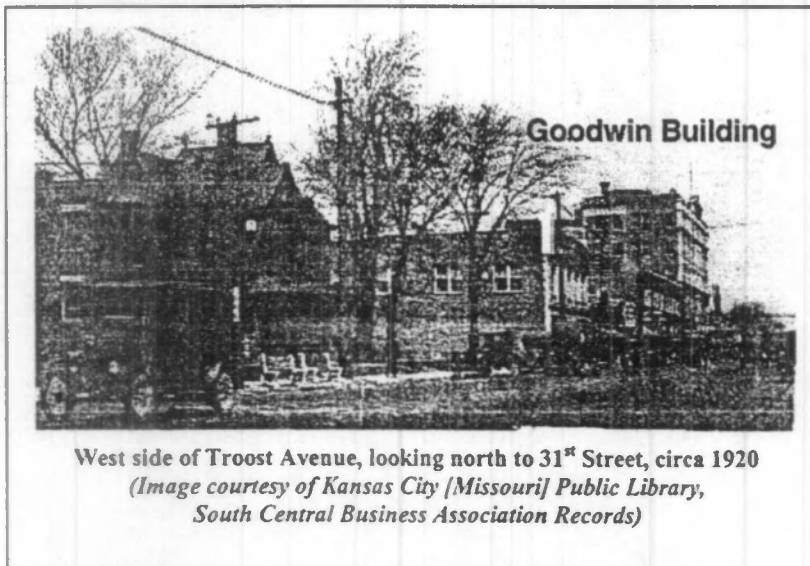
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**F. W. Woolworth Building**  
**Jackson County, Missouri**

population of the ward, with its southernmost boundary at 39<sup>th</sup> Street, grew by more than 32,495 residents, a 127.5 percent increase over the previous decade.<sup>6</sup> At this time, the F. W. Woolworth Company operated more than seven hundred stores in the United States. The *Kansas City Post* article reported, "The new Kansas City store remains the only one seriously considered by Woolworth officials as a second store in any city except those having double the population of Kansas City's entire metropolitan area."<sup>7</sup> Two years later, in 1928, Woolworth opened the store at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue in the same ward, underscoring the growth in the ward and the policy of the Woolworth Company to establish suburban stores in high pedestrian traffic areas. By 1930, the Woolworth chain in Kansas City also included a store at 4626 Troost Avenue, near the then southernmost boundary of the city's suburban development, and a second downtown store at 556 Walnut Street.<sup>8</sup>

W. H. Goodwin erected the first commercial building to occupy the lots at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue.<sup>9</sup> The architect, T. G. Wilson, designed a one-story brick building to house a "cleaning business."<sup>10</sup> A close



examination of the circa 1920 photograph to the left indicates a façade treatment that incorporated a shaped parapet with terra-cotta coping projecting above the roofline and large hanging signage installed perpendicular to the wall face. According to city directories, the Monkey Steam Dye Works Company, which had numerous outlets throughout the city, established a new main office and plant at 3122 Troost

<sup>6</sup> Rick Montgomery and Shirl Kasper, *Kansas City: An American Story* (Kansas City, MO: Kansas City Star, 1999), 207.

<sup>7</sup> *Kansas City (MO) Post*, 4 May 1926, Mounted Clippings File, Special Collections, Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library.

<sup>8</sup> Neither building is extant.

<sup>9</sup> *Western Contractor*, Vol. 27, No. 742 (February 1915): 28

<sup>10</sup> City of Kansas City Missouri, Permit No. 11417 (11 March 1915), City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission.

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Avenue in 1915. Prior to the construction of the brick commercial building, a two-story frame house occupied the lot.<sup>11</sup>

At this time, the construction of commercial buildings on Troost Avenue in the vicinity of 31st Street and Linwood Boulevard created the first retail shopping district away from the downtown Kansas City business area. An early 1920s postcard shows the development of the commercial district. In the foreground on the east (left) side of Troost Avenue are the six-story Westover office building, the Strauss



**Troost Avenue looking north to 31<sup>st</sup> Street, circa 1920**  
*(Image courtesy of the Kansas City [Missouri] Public Library,  
Mrs. Sam Ray Postcard Collection)*

Peyton photography studio, a millinery shop, a corset shop, the Prudential Insurance Company, and the Swyden Rug and Drapery Company. The colonnaded Rossington apartments are in the background on the east (right) side of Troost Avenue. On the west (left) side of the street in the background is the 1918 multi-story Joseph C. Wirthman Building, which housed a corner

drugstore; the Isis Theater and cafeteria; and offices for physicians and dentists. Smaller buildings in the foreground on the west side of the street included a millinery shop, small dry goods store, a florist, a restaurant, and a piano store. Just south of the building in the foreground on the west side of the street and out of camera range was the building at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue. In 1920, the city directory lists the Monkey Steam Dye Works Company at this space. Subsequent city directories list Monkey Steam Dye Works at 3122 Troost Avenue; and a number of businesses, including the Empress Boot Shop and a beauty parlor, at the space at 3120 Troost Avenue, indicating that the tenant either sublet or the owner rented one side of the storefront space.

<sup>11</sup> City of Kansas City Missouri, Permit No. 57952 (1 March 1915), City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission.

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In 1927, Frank Swyden's rug cleaning business occupied the space at 3122 Troost Avenue and a beauty parlor occupied the space next door at 3120 Troost Avenue. A September 27, 1927 building permit indicates that the owner of the property, W. W. Godwin, applied for a permit to undertake a substantial renovation and expansion of the building, including the addition of a basement, stone foundation, brick addition, and



3120-3122 Troost Avenue, F. W. Woolworth Building, circa 1939  
(Image courtesy of the City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission)

composition roof. The renovation doubled the size of the building. An examination of the building and historic photographs indicates that the renovation retained portions of the existing structure, including the side walls. These sources indicate that the primary façade, with its balustrade parapet and Moderne storefront, dates to the 1927 renovation. Beginning in 1928 and continuing into the 1950s, the city directories identify the space as the F. W. Woolworth Company "Five and Ten Cent Store." The 1939 county assessor's photographs on file at the City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission documents the building's retention of its historic appearance.

**WOOLWORTH FIVE-AND-TEN-CENT STORES**

Five-and-dime stores played a central role in the social customs and economy of America in the first half of the twentieth century. From before 1900 until after World War II, The F. W. Woolworth five-and-ten-cent store was the oldest and dominant dime store chain in the country. The chain began in 1879 when Frank Winfield Woolworth opened a notions store and pioneered retail precedents that continue today — the practice of buying merchandise direct from manufacturers in large volumes, establishing fixed prices on all items (five or ten cents), and placing merchandise out on display for the public to view, select, and purchase. Prior to the advent of Woolworth's marketing innovations, customers asked a clerk to select items from behind the counter and to quote a price that often became the subject of bargaining. Woolworth was also the first general merchandise retailer to establish the lunch counter as an integral component in the dime store. Thus, in addition to conveniently accessible discounted merchandise attracting shoppers, the store became a gathering place for social and business encounters.



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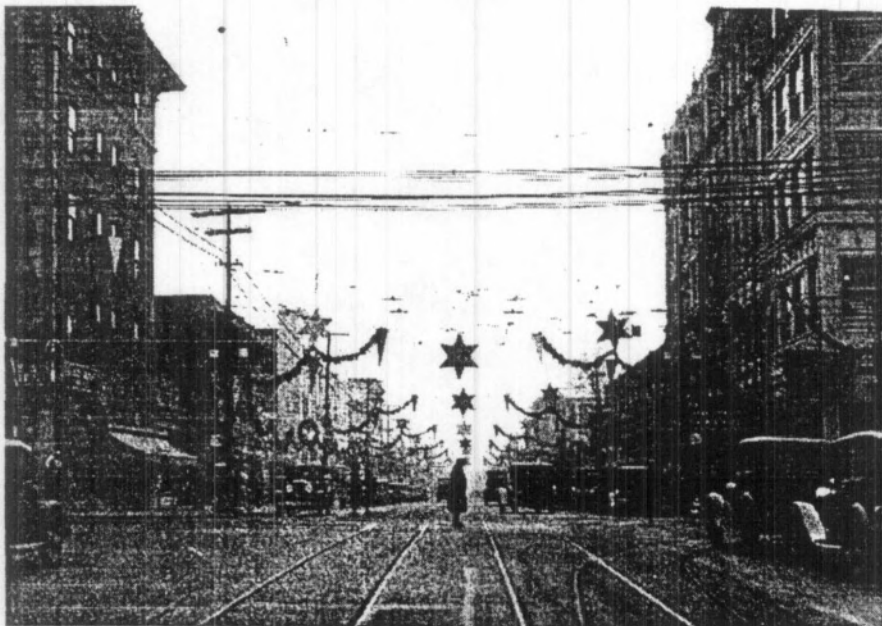
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**F. W. Woolworth Building  
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After initial success of his store in Pennsylvania, Woolworth and his brother, Charles S. Woolworth, opened a large number of five-and-ten-cent stores. Other businesses and chains copied the Woolworth format and during the first half of the twentieth century, the five-and-dime specialty store became a fixture in America's commercial corridors.

In 1911, the F. W. Woolworth Company incorporated, merging six chains of five-and-ten-cent stores (586 stores) founded by the Woolworth brothers and others. One of these businesses was that of the S. H. Knox and Company five-and-ten-cent store in downtown Kansas City, Missouri. In 1919, when F. W. Woolworth died, his chain consisted of 1,081 stores in the United States and Canada.<sup>12</sup> At a time when department store chains were regional, Woolworth's was one of a very few national operations.

The next decade was a boom period for expanding chain stores. The Woolworth Company began to establish multiple stores in selected large cities, primarily in their central business districts and in "suburban" middle-class commercial districts at locations with high pedestrian traffic near major streetcar



**Troost Avenue looking south at intersection of 31<sup>st</sup> Street, 1929**  
*(Image courtesy of the Kansas City [Missouri] Public Library,  
South Central Business Association Records)*

<sup>12</sup> Paul Gaffney, "Dime Stores/Woolworth's," in the *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture* [article online]; available at [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_g1epc/is\\_tov/ai\\_2419100342](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_g1epc/is_tov/ai_2419100342); Internet; accessed 19 February 2004.

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lines, such as the store at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue. Although there were a number of stores to be found in working-class neighborhoods, the per capita distribution of stores reflected a decided corporate preference for doing business in middle-class neighborhoods.<sup>13</sup>

Like other American five-and-dime stores, Woolworth's marketed both brand name and general merchandise at low prices and featured something for everyone — kitchen wares, toys, sewing materials, hardware, clothing, costume jewelry, cosmetics, and candy — at prices affordable to the working and middle classes. The dime store's lunch counter<sup>14</sup> became a common meeting place for businessmen and shoppers. The presence of suburban stores in major cities meant that a Woolworth store often functioned as a neighborhood store for many of its customers.<sup>15</sup>

The Woolworth Company introduced innovations that were exclusive to the company. Although the Woolworth chain created a prototype discount retail outlet, the company encouraged managers to make their stores local institutions. As a result, from the lunch counter menu to specialized merchandise, Woolworth stores developed their own local character and varied widely from region to region and from city to town. Woolworth's also paid better wages than most of its competitors and was a major employer of women. F. W. Woolworth himself introduced minimum wages for all positions, paid vacations, and Christmas bonuses, all of which were unusual practices in the early twentieth century.

Woolworth's literally remained a dime store until 1932 when the company raised its top price to 20 cents. The limited price practice ended, however, when the company expanded its offerings to include higher priced merchandise such as furniture and appliances in 1935. By the 1940s, Woolworth's was the nation's largest food-service retailer, maintaining nearly a thousand lunch counters across the United States.<sup>16</sup>

The location of Woolworth's third store in Kansas City at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue in 1928 reflected the corporate marketing strategies of the Woolworth Company at that time. In the 1920s, streetcar lines ran

<sup>13</sup> Scott A. Newman, "Jazz Age Chicago — F. W. Woolworth Co. Stores," June 1997, available at <http://chicago.urban-history.org/scrapbks/chains/woolwrth.htm>; Internet; accessed 18 March 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Neuman, "Jazz Age Chicago — F. W. Woolworth Co. Stores," available at <http://chicago.urban-history.org/scrapbks/chains/woolwrth.htm>; Internet. In 1960, Woolworth's lunch counters were the sites of civil rights sit-ins after the first sit-in occurred at a Woolworth's in Greenville, North Carolina in February 1960. Soon protesters occupying lunch counters throughout the South called for a national boycott against the chain. The company's earnings dropped by almost 10 percent and many stores integrated their lunch counters within a few months.

<sup>15</sup> Gaffney, "Dime Stores/Woolworth's," available at [http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_glepc/is\\_tov/ai\\_2419100342](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_glepc/is_tov/ai_2419100342); Internet.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

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along 31<sup>st</sup> Street, Troost Avenue, and Linwood Boulevard. The block between 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Linwood Boulevard was a busy transfer location with a high level of pedestrian traffic. Moreover, beginning in the early 1920s, Kansas City embarked on a massive infrastructure project, widening and paving Troost Avenue, "The longest street in the city south from 27<sup>th</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> streets." Building and business development ensued.<sup>17</sup>

This commercial corridor reflected the middle-class venue required by the Woolworth Company. Among the new buildings erected in the 1920s on the block of Troost Avenue between 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Linwood Boulevard were the Westover Office Building, which housed the Linwood State Bank and offices for many of Kansas City's leading doctors and dentists (including one of the City's first orthodontists); the



**Troost Avenue looking southwest from 31<sup>st</sup> Street, 1935**  
*(Image courtesy of the Kansas City [Missouri] Public Library,  
South Central Business Association Records)*

<sup>17</sup> "South Troost Development Lines Mark Expansion of Trade Artery: Improvements Enhance City's Longest Street from 27<sup>th</sup> to 75<sup>th</sup> — Several New Buildings Ready for Occupancy," *Kansas City (MO) Journal Post*, 28 December 1929.



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Community State Bank; the Shankman Building, which housed a branch post office and numerous shops and offices; and the Pioneer Automobile Service Company.<sup>18</sup>



Woolworth store interior and employees circa 1926  
(Image courtesy of *Remembering Woolworth's: A Nostalgic History of the World's Most Famous Five-and-Dime*)



Typical 1950s Woolworth sales floor  
(Image courtesy of *Remembering Woolworth's: A Nostalgic History of the World's Most Famous Five-and-Dime*)

Woolworth's marketing innovations and narrow urban lots dictated the spatial arrangement of Woolworth buildings. A plan that allowed customers to go from area to area to view merchandise required a large volume of open space, divided only by the structural columns. This space accommodated wide counters arranged in a rectangular pattern with space for clerks in an enclosed central aisle. These rectangular counter units formed a grid, creating aisles for the public that allowed convenient access throughout the display floor. Because of the depth of the stores, the length of the display counter units ran from front to rear, mimicking the building's proportions. The depth of the store also required electrical lighting fixtures arranged in rows over the counters and light-colored ceilings and walls to reflect the light. The soda fountain and grill was usually at the rear or along one side of the floor near a door that accessed the basement or a supply room.

The interior configuration continued into the 1950s. In the post-World War II period, the open counter display areas remained, but

acoustical tile replaced tin ceilings and fluorescent light fixtures took the place of pendant incandescent lights. Air conditioning precluded the use of ceiling fans and asbestos tile covered worn wooden floors.

<sup>18</sup> *Kansas City (MO) Times*, 14 December 1974, Mrs. Sam Ray Postcard Collection [collection online] available from the Kansas City (Missouri) Public Library at <http://www.kclibrary.org/resources/sc/media.cfm?mediaID=35169>; Internet; accessed 17 March 2004.

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The store design utilized by the Woolworth Company in the early twentieth century were one-part or two-part commercial block designs with expansive display windows punctuated by multiple recessed double-leaf entrances.

Unlike their main competitor, the S. S. Kresge Company, which had its own architectural division, the Woolworth Company both leased and erected stores designed by local architects. This was due, in part, to the fact that the Woolworth Company was a consolidation of a number of different store chains and engaged in speculative secondary locations in large cities to undercut existing businesses. Instead of having a standard building design, the Woolworth Company utilized its corporate logo as a narrow red sign with gold lettering that spanned the façade of the stores. The Woolworth Company continued this design practice throughout the first half of the twentieth century as evidenced by the ubiquitous red and gold corporate signage on the one-part commercial block building with a multiple entrance storefront that the company erected in Battle Creek, Michigan in 1941.



**Battle Creek Michigan Store Design, 1941**  
*(Image courtesy of Willard Public Library, Battle Creek Michigan, "Photographs from Battle Creek History," available at [http://www2.willard.lib.mi.us/bcphotos/stores/h54\\_5240.htm](http://www2.willard.lib.mi.us/bcphotos/stores/h54_5240.htm))*

The simple design treatment of the one-part commercial block building at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue reflects stylistic trends and the evolution of commercial design in the early twentieth century as well as the preferences of the Woolworth Company. Like most commercial buildings erected after World War I and throughout the 1920s, the building's simple utilitarian design is carefully and conservatively detailed with minimal architectural ornament. Compared to earlier, more ornate commercial storefronts that incorporated columns, pilasters, belt courses, and ornate grand entrances, the façade of the building at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue has a "flattened" appearance that features brickwork and sparse terra-cotta ornamentation. This scaled-down approach to design has only one vague historical reference, which is in the balustrade design of the parapet's end bays. The remainder of the building reflects the advent of streamlined modern commercial design, especially the use of the curved glazing on the corners of the recessed entrances of the dominant storefront.

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Troost Avenue remained an important commercial corridor throughout the 1950s, providing goods and services to the surrounding middle-class neighborhoods. Buses supplanted the electric streetcar and the area continued to be a busy and important transfer point in Kansas City's public transportation system. The Woolworth store at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue continued to operate throughout this decade.



Troost Avenue looking northeast from Linwood Boulevard, 1955  
(Image courtesy of the Kansas City [Missouri] Public Library)

In the 1960s, the five-and-dime model evolved into the larger discount store located near expanding suburbs. In 1962, the F. W. Woolworth Company founded the Woolco chain to compete with the Kresge Company's Kmart stores. At the same time, the Woolworth Company closed many of its large downtown stores. The Kansas City store between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets on Main Street closed in 1964.

The Woolco chain closed in the United States in 1982, but it was not until 1997 that the Woolworth Company closed its four hundred remaining five-and-ten-cent stores. Ironically, where once the speculative neighborhood Woolworth chain store undercut the local "mom-and-pop" notions store, the lower prices offered by the large discount chain stores contributed to the demise of the Main Street Woolworth store. The same year that the last Woolworth five-and-dime store closed, Wal-Mart replaced Woolworth on the Dow Jones Industrial Average.<sup>19</sup>

**SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Due to its high degree of historic architectural integrity, The F. W. Woolworth Building at 3120-3122 Troost Avenue is locally significant for its associations with the key role of the five-and-ten-cent store in American commerce and culture in the first half of the twentieth century. It is a representative example of the phenomenon of discount retailing that emerged in the United States at this time and provides insight into the revolution of consumerism that transformed the ways goods are purchased. Its physical

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presence today reflects the role of the Woolworth store as part of the architectural backdrop for the collective social experience that enhanced the main commercial streets of America. In particular, it is the only extant example of the chain's suburban stores established prior to the World War II in Kansas City. As such, it provides important information about the evolution of commercial centers along Kansas City's streetcar system, as well as the Woolworth Company's practices of locating suburban outlets near middle-class neighborhoods with a high level of pedestrian traffic. Because of its unique associations with the F. W. Woolworth Company and the commercial development of retail sales outlets in Kansas City and its rarity as an early commercial suburban property type, it merits listing in the National Register of Historic Places

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<sup>19</sup> "F. W. Woolworth Company," [article online]; available at <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/F.W.%20Woolworth%20Company>; Internet; accessed 30 October 2004.

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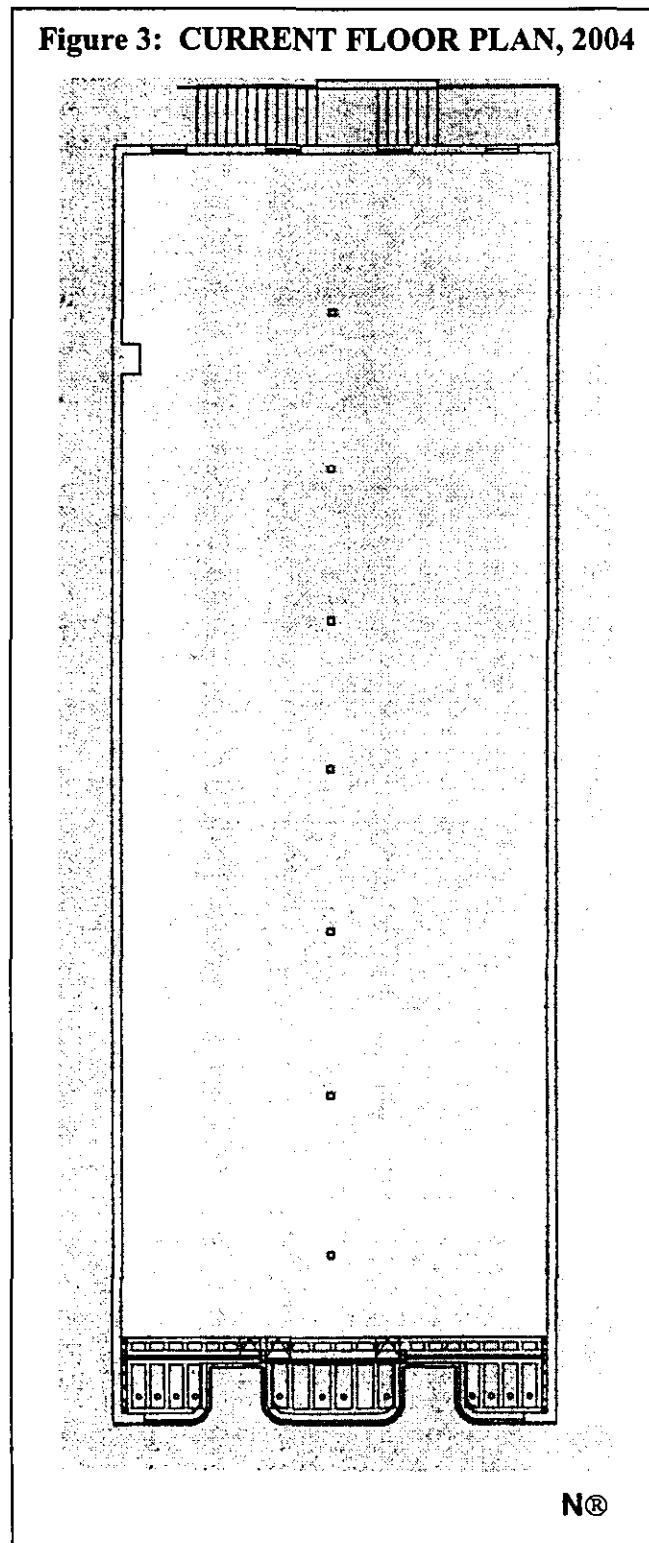
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**Figure 3: CURRENT FLOOR PLAN, 2004**



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**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

**Photographer:** Brad Finch  
F-Stop Photography  
Kansas City, Missouri 64116

**Date of Photographs:** July 2004

**Location of Original Negatives:** Historic Preservation Services, LLC  
323 W 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 112  
Kansas City, Missouri 64105

Photograph Number	Description	Camera View
1.	Exterior	West
2.	Exterior	Northeast
3.	Exterior	East
4.	Exterior	Northwest
5.	Exterior	Northwest
6.	Exterior	West
7.	Exterior	Southwest
8.	Exterior Door Detail	West
9.	Interior: Ground Floor	Northeast
10.	Interior: Ground Floor	Northeast
11.	Interior: Ground Floor	Northwest
12.	Interior: Ground Floor	Southwest
13.	Interior: Ground Floor	East
14.	Interior: Ground Floor	Southwest
15.	Interior: Basement	Northwest
16.	Interior: Basement	West





